

# SIGHT & SOUND

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## ARTICLES

Cornish Pasty

Orko

The Wind in India

Double Cross!

A Little More Nonsense  
Please!

Extract from a Letter

Dublin to Killarney

"Their Own Place So  
True"





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# NEWS REEL

Comments of the Quarter

by SIGHT AND SOUND

Contributors

## Imperial Cement

To-day it is more than ever important that the various portions of the Commonwealth should contrive to understand one another. It is good news, therefore, that the Imperial Relations Trust though reducing its activities in other directions, is continuing its film work, for the film is one of the principal ingredients for cementing the good will and mutual understanding which is so necessary. As a result of a visit paid to New Zealand and Australia this spring by their film officer, Mr. John Grierson, steps have now been taken on his recommendation to send to each Dominion a small collection of films which can form the nucleus of a library comparable to Sir Harry Lindsay's Imperial Institute's Empire Film Library in this country. Before Mr. Grierson left the countries he established a small committee to co-ordinate their own production of official films as well as to act as the body supervising the distribution of films from and of Britain.

It is also satisfactory to note that some of the Ministry of Information's productions are designed for imperial distribution and that the British Council has produced in *Atlantic*, a Mary Field diagrammatic film, supervised by Professor Newton, the prototype of a common history teaching film for use in all parts of the world. Though extremely condensed, this film shows how the cinema can be used as a unifying force. The Imperial Relations Trust have also had produced for general circulation within the British Empire a film on grass breeding at the Aberystwyth station, since this is a subject of common interest to all agricultural communities.

## What's in a Name?

Government circles are seeking the answer to the question "When's culture not culture?" On this knotty point hang all the relationships between the British Council and its orders to develop cultural relations with foreign countries on the one hand, and the Ministry of Information, which is told to get the British point of view across to foreign countries, on the other. So far, all that has happened is that each body succeeds in getting in the other's way and if it can score a point by double-crossing the other, it has no hesitation in so doing. Between the respective film sections there have been several set-to's but victory still hangs in the balance. The latest skirmish is concerned with a neat little job called *The Answer*, which Spectator Films made for the British Council. Having seen it, the Ministry say that it is political and not cultural, and so should be taken away from the Council and handled by themselves. The Council take the opposite view. It is all very petty and the average on-looker says a plague on both your houses! The war effort needs all the energy of which we are capable and it is a scandal that the two bodies cannot be compelled to compose their differences and reach agreement to co-operate

and not to conflict. Why in short, as a fair division of labour, should not the Ministry of Information with its specialist knowledge of home renting and distribution concentrate on the domestic front and the British Council and its ally the Travel and Industrial Development Association concentrate on their particular subject of specialization, the foreign front?

## Plus ça Change

Our new despots in the Ministry of Information are showing a callous disregard of Parliamentary wishes as expressed in the Thirteenth Report from the Select Committee on National Expenditure. So far as can be seen few, if any, of the 13 recommendations are being implemented. The Committee suggested, for example, that no further commitments be entered into by the Films Division in respect of their non-theatrical distribution unless very clear evidence was obtained from experience that the scheme was making a contribution to the war effort commensurate with an estimate of expenditure of £195,000 in its first year of operation. Within a few weeks the Minister of Information informed the world through the press and wireless that a fleet of 76 vans would visit villages not served by cinemas. Talkie equipment would be installed in halls and schools and country people would see films both instructional and entertaining. In the long winter evenings, the Minister pointed out, these free shows should serve a very useful purpose. At the meeting at which this announcement was made, three of the 20 films made for the purpose were shown, even though the Select Committee recommended that documentary films which do not require immediate and widespread distribution (like the five-minute shorts) should be distributed on a commercial basis and earn what rent they can. Quite apart from the pros and cons of the scheme it is a disturbing thought that a Select Committee's suggestions can thus be set aside by those fledgling Civil Servants of Malet Street whose little spell of brief authority seems to have gone to their heads. If we are not to be governed by Parliament's wishes, what are we fighting for?

## News for the World

As another example of the non-co-operative character of the Ministry of Information's Film Division there are disquieting rumours circulating about its reluctance to recognise that it is bad policy for the British Government officially to sponsor the circulation of two differing news reels to foreign countries. Apparently the Division are so wedded to one company and an American edited commentary that they are refusing to implement the recommendation of the House of Commons Select Committee on National Expenditure that *British News* should be substituted for the Ministry news-reel service in such countries as it exists



*British News* is a composite reel in the sense that it contains the cream of the stories from every member of the News Reel Association. It is not unusual therefore for any one issue to contain items from all five of the companies concerned. Originally the reel was started to provide the backbone of the show at the British Pavilion's cinema in the New York World Fair by holding a mirror to the British scene. Though unfortunately the Ministry allowed it to lapse during the winter months, it was revived by the Department of Overseas Trade working through the British Council when the Fair reopened this May and its circulation was extended to the Colonies. In both the New York Fair and the other places where it is shown in the public theatres, it has won golden opinions and has aroused a great deal of interest as showing objectively the progress of the war from the British end. As the only thing of its kind, it is thus deservedly popular. It is to be hoped that we shall never tamely allow this innovation to lapse. For far too long our own people have been fed with news material of foreign origin. Since news values differ enormously, depending where the editing is done, many political events, such as a change of government, are given entirely the wrong slant and the wrong impression is presented. Trivial though it may be, baseball may be as tedious to the British Empire as is cricket or football to the average American, and the Empire after all prefers to be nurtured on British news and views.

### **The New Propaganda**

The Ministry of Information Films Division in one aspect of its work has, however, displayed a true understanding of our national psychology and has scored a complete success with its Five-Minute Shorts. The Film Trade, the critics and the public alike seem to be pleased with this novel type of propaganda. On the whole the directors have been successful in condensing their message into the allotted timespan and some of the films have considerable dramatic force in the Grand Guignol manner. The way in which they have gone over proves that even in an entertainment programme which the public has paid to see, it will stand for direct propaganda and especially propaganda to do with the war, if it is served up as such. Where much propaganda went wrong in the past was in trying to disguise itself and allowing the public only to find out that it had been spoofed in the last few minutes. This had an irritating effect and resulted in more ill-will than good being created.

### **The Services and the Film**

The film has a different appeal to the different services. To the R.A.F. it is primarily an instructional instrument and their series of films on the theory of flight, meteorology and kindred subjects rank amongst the finest instructional films that have been made. It is only within the last few months that the Force has been sufficiently persuaded as to allow facilities for taking pictures of the various commands in action. As propaganda both at home and abroad some of the results are first-class, especially a recent item made on patrol with the Coastal Command.

The Navy has mainly used the film as entertainment for ships' crews at sea or on foreign stations but since the start of the present year and especially during the Norwegian Campaign it gave facilities to news reel cameramen to be in H.M. ships with the result that some of the most lovely and

some of the most exciting sea shots ever seen have been taken. Oddly enough the Board of Admiralty has not emulated the Royal Air Force in having instructional films made. Yet in navigation, sailing, gunnery and engineering there are numberless subjects, instruction in which could be facilitated by judicious use of films. There was a chance just before the outbreak of war that something might be done but since then the matter has been left in abeyance.

To the Army the film has been a mild means of giving recruits instruction in some aspects of musketry and mechanisation but it has never been used as fully as it might for instruction in strategy and tactics. With the new developments in the Army educational work, there is every likelihood that the teaching film will be as extensively used as in ordinary educational work since there is now a very fair supply of projectors in most Commands. It has also been suggested to the Central Council of Adult Education in H.M. Forces that courses on Film Appreciation should be inserted in the curriculum, since the experience of occasional lectures to units in S.E. England and Scotland shows that this is a popular subject and, from the general cultural point of view, a valuable one.

### **Concentrate on Film Supply**

The final draft report of the British Film Institute's Educational Film Campaign has been completed. The findings are what intelligent anticipation might have expected but they have the advantage of providing concrete evidence to confirm what everybody concerned with the educational film suspected. The principal obstacle to the further extension of the use of the films in schools is now not the lack of projectors but the supply of films. The Institute makes a strong recommendation, therefore, for the establishment of Regional Film Libraries, on the administration of which there is now a lot of information thanks to the enterprise of the Carnegie Trustees in establishing the Scottish Regional Film Library under the direction of the Scottish Film Council of the Institute. Pending the formation of a complete series of such libraries, covering the country, Local Education Authorities must recognise that their responsibility does not end with installing a projector. It must also be maintained and fed and this normally costs between £15 and £20 a year. There naturally follow on to these suggestions for improving the supply of films and others calling attention to the need of constantly having further films produced; otherwise the teaching quality of the films will not keep pace with improving technique in their use.

Another strong point is made of the need for the Training Colleges to include projection technique in their curriculum and for local authorities to organise refresher courses. And perhaps the most important recommendation of all is that every encouragement should be given to the formation of Teachers' Film Groups. Wherever these bodies exist as at Liverpool, Manchester, Wolverhampton, London and elsewhere, interest and enthusiasm is maintained. But where they do not exist the projectors in the area tend to lie idle or be used solely for entertainment purposes at Christmas parties and other events. The Governors of the Institute are now considering how ways and means can be found to follow up the campaign by appointing a whole-time organiser so that the time and energy spent on assembling the evidence and discovering what should be done shall not be wasted and the campaign be a mere nine days' wonder.



## Future Film Fare

The cutting off of the European and the restriction of the British market has caused Hollywood to give more attention than usual to its home shop-window and, so far as export is concerned, to South America. A number of goodwill visits have been made by high executives to Rio, Buenos Aires, Valparaiso, Lima, Panama and other towns during which opportunity has been taken of conferring with leading exhibitors. It is to be expected, therefore, that the new American films will cater more for U.S.A. and Latin-American than British tastes. Nevertheless there are a number of interesting new films shortly to be seen. First and foremost is Chaplin's *Dictator*; Capra is working on a new film *Meet John Doe*, in which Gary Cooper and Barbara Stanwyck are playing leads. Other likely-looking titles are *Tropical Sinners*, with Marlene Dietrich; a dramatised version of *Little Men*, the novel by Louisa May Alcott; *Virginia* with Madeleine Carroll and a new Marx Brothers film *Go West*.

Contrary to expectation the British studios are working hard. The most important productions in hand would seem to be *Kipps*, which 20th Century have on the floor; Warner's *An Empire was Built*, with Will Fyffe; Gabriel Pascal's *Major Barbara*; Anthony Asquith's *Quiet Wedding*; and probably Thorold Dickinson's direction of *Disraeli* will be interesting. The leading shorts companies are being kept fairly busy on official work by the British Council and the Ministry of Information, and there is a steady trickle from the big sponsors, as for example the British Commercial Gas Association's four films, three made by the late Ruby Grierson and one by Edgar Anstey. In short, from the theatrical point of view there is sure to be something worth seeing both of U.S. and British origin, and thanks to the Ministry of Information there will be no dearth of documentary material for specialist, film society and non-theatrical distribution.

## Speed Shells by Film

Industry is clamouring for more and more workers to give the Forces the *material* to see this thing through. The Minister of Labour has stressed the importance of a tremendous speed-up in training men and women to take their places in this new burst of constructive effort.

So far, little consideration seems to have given to the rôle which the film might play in training these new recruits to Industry. Most industrial workers have to perform physical movements and the film has already proved its ability to analyse movement, as witness the series of physical education films that have been produced over the past few years. As a first step, therefore, towards putting new hands to the bench, thought should be given to devising a group of handicraft films on the proper methods of using tools and machines of all kinds. To this direct instructional group should be added a further series showing the relation of the individual act to the whole process. By such means the General Post Office managed by its films to sustain and improve its output through showing each member of its staff that, no matter how humdrum his job, he was contributing to the work of the whole department and that without him it would be so much less efficient.

## Obituary

In Ralph Hanbury, the Managing Director of Radio Pictures, and in Ruby Grierson, who was making a name for herself as a director in the Realist Film Unit, the war has claimed two victims who could ill be spared.

Ralph Hanbury, his son, his daughter and his grandchild were all killed by the same bomb one night shortly after he and his family had moved out of the centre of London so as to be near the Company's new offices. In him the film world of Wardour Street loses one of its most live members whose hard work and shrewd common sense had put his company in the forefront of the renters.

Ruby Grierson, who was John Grierson's youngest sister, was drowned when the *City of Benares* was torpedoed. Miss Grierson was making the passage for the Canadian Government Department, which her brother directs, in order to take a film of the evacuee children on the voyage and after their arrival in Canada.

Though she was a comparative newcomer to the professional documentary film movement, she had already made her mark as a keen observer of social conditions. She helped with *Housing Problems* and *Today We Live*, and last year directed the Petroleum Film Bureau's *Cargo for Ardrossan*. Before sailing she had just completed some five-minute shorts on food for the British Commercial Gas Association in which there was evidence that a more sympathetic technique was developing. Her charming personality set at their ease the folk she set out to record and her native Scottish common sense gave an authenticity to her work. Had she lived there is no doubt that she would rapidly have risen to the top of her profession.

By the recent death of John Maxwell the film trade has sustained a third severe loss. A hard-headed driver of good bargains, he built up a powerful organisation and by his prudent policy of never spending more than he was likely to get back, he managed to retain some confidence in the financial integrity of the British Film Trade at a time when the Arabian Nights antics of some of its members had reduced the industry to the verge of extinction. Beneath his dour exterior he had a kindly heart and went out of his way to help such bodies as the British Film Institute.

## WITHOUT COMMENT

### 100 PER CENT. FRENCH

#### Film Industry Now in Home of a Pioneer

Vichy, Friday.—The reorganised French cinema industry is 100 per cent. French. It has made a start in the "street of the first film" at Lyons, in the workshop founded by Louis Lumiere, "father" of the cinema.

A film retelling for the French public the attack by British warships and planes on the French Fleet at Oran has been finished.

For the first time the voice of Marshal Pétain will be heard in a cinema. In a film he will be heard announcing over the radio that he had been obliged to ask for an armistice.—Reuter, as quoted in the London *Evening News*.





*The Islanders*

G.P.O.

## CORNISH PASTY

**When two strong men stand face to face they talk of many things—of beekeeping, sheepdogs, broccoli, President Kruger, churches and films. Here is an account, from J. C. TREWIN, of a dialogue which took place on one war-time Cornish evening**

I WAS SPEAKING one evening to a Cornish farmer. Our dialogue, which began with beekeeping, had touched lightly on sheep-dogs, broccoli, President Kruger—I am not sure where he came into it—the history of the local church (1268), and the conveyance of coal to Padstow.

Suddenly we found ourselves in the middle of Modern Entertainment—though the precise link between the cinema and Padstow coal must always be as much of a mystery to me as the plot of *Wuthering Heights*.

Anyway, the cinema was there for judgment. And as the day waned my neighbour shook his oaken staff in the direction of Hollywood and observed curtly:

"They don't tell 'ee nothing."

"But surely——" I began.

The cudgel, swinging fiercely, swept through the massed ranks of Hollywood and Elstree. "Nothing, I said. . . . Now listen here!"

I listened. My friend's complaint was simple. As a cinema die-hard he wanted his sub-titles. For twelve years he had mourned them, and he would not be comforted.

\* \* \* \*

Naturally he had started his cinema-going life long before the screen spoke with the tongues of men and of angels. He had grown inured to masses of printed dialogue, to rich acres of exposition, to "connecting links" as thick as chain cables. When at last the players began to tell their own stories he was gravelled, and he has been gravelled—and disgruntled—for upwards of a dozen years. Directional subtleties merely annoy him. He has no time for skilful cutting, cunning hints, Tchegovian suggestions, the niceties of the young men from Elstree. He wants his sub-titles, wants

them regularly, wants them interleaved with the "shots", as of old. And, he asks, why in the name of Caractacus—another mystery—can't he have them?

Well, I sympathise. They linger, too, in my own memory—in the sort of rosy glow with which old players surround the Chief and the Bancrofts and Toole and Arthur Roberts. The sub-title belongs to a blessed age when men fled the time carelessly as they did in the golden world. It is one of Mnemosyne's favourite children.

The silent film used to be a species of illustrated serial. If you were a slow reader the thing was sometimes difficult; if you read quickly you complained that the titles held the screen too long. But, on the whole, the system worked well, and—with my Cornish neighbour—I mourn it as Kipling once mourned the passing of the three-decker novel.

\* \* \* \*

Many of you will remember. After the spate of credit titles, after the last wardrobe mistress had been thanked, the author came briskly to business and you found a legend like this:

"New York. Cosmopolitan city where men and women of many races, surging, jostling, beneath Broadway's blinding arcs, mingle in the myriad night clubs close to the Great White Way."

(*Rapid shot of night club on Great White Way.*)

"One of the gayest haunts is Pellegrini's Bar. To it, on a night in October, come young Jim McBride, student from Wisconsin, and his uncle, Bucky Holmes."

(*They come and Bucky speaks. As, fortunately, we are not lip-readers, we have to wait for the next sub-title. It arrives.*)



"Now we're here, boy, let me tell you why I brought you to this place."

(He does—and, like Pope's wounded snake, dragging its slow length along, the movie gets going.)

Slow—yes. But, believe me, when it was over, we knew every person intimately. A famous stage producer is said to have told a leading man to turn right and convey by his expression that he had an uncle in York cutting him off with a shilling. That is where an old-style film-actor had all the luck. He had only to stand still while copious sub-titles told the story of his life and illuminated the career of that Northern miser.

Great times—and if you felt occasionally that the exposition, like the first chapter of any Waverley novel, was rather heavy going, you knew at least that you were being Told All.

Caption-writers were careful not to strain our imagination. I can remember an unexampled title which may remind you, in its proud virility, of a line by Adam Lindsay Gordon.

Two strong men were standing face to face. It was a grave moment, with some question of a girl, and, I believe, of other things. The situation had to be resolved. One strong man raised his revolver—and at this point there was a caption. It said, with consummate brevity:

"BANG!"

\* \* \* \*

Often, of course, the orchestra helped. We remember the horses' hooves, the whistles, the languishing pianists. But, in the best films, the caption-writer was given his head. Practitioners evolved a style of their own which had in it more of Mrs. Amanda Ros than of George Moore. There were such terse sentences as: "Haggard, Ralph stumbles into the tousled street", and such mouthfuls as: "That night, John, stifling the fears that rose in his heart, caught the Hudson express to North Catspaw. While he lay in his sleeping-bunk the tale of the negro porter recurred to him with ever-increasing intensity." (*Shot here of the tale of the N.P. recurring.*)

Celebrated authors took a hand—with varying results. Arnold Bennett experimented as thoroughly as usual. The late Humbert Wolfe recalled an evening when he sat in a box at one of Bennett's films and crouched deeper and deeper:

"Arnold watched me with increasing amusement. . . . 'Anyhow,' he said, 'it's a Primitive. Don't you see? We're still painting on wood with tempera. Give it—and me—time.'"

\* \* \* \*

And now the art has gone, though there may still be people who pursue it as others work samplers or upholster hansom-cabs. Occasionally you get a crisp "London" or "Budapest" or "New York" imposed on a photograph of roofs or spires or skyscrapers, but the true sub-title, the verbal Niagara, the Blue-Book of the screen, is for ever dead, gone with the wind. Instead of reading, we must listen. "And we do enough of that outside," grumbles my neighbour.

He wants his film to tell a good, direct story. If there are purple patches, let them be explained. The screen must say "Crash!" or "Hurrah! Hurrah!" or "Came the night express", or "Hamlet, son of the late King, is melancholy because of his father's death and the rapid marriage of his mother the Queen with his uncle, so that the funeral baked meats, etc., etc." (*Shot of Hamlet, melancholy, followed by another of the funeral baked meats.*)

To-day, alas! the films, so talkative in one manner, are silent in another. "They don't tell 'ee . . ." And down the cudgel fell.

\* \* \* \*

It was twilight. My friend had vanished in his stables. Alone, and in silence, I offered a sprig of rosemary to the memory of an art that, like Chatterton, had perished in its pride. And a sub-title in the fine old mood came reverently to my lips as I walked away:

DARKNESS APPROACHED. WITH NIGHT QUIVERING ABOVE  
THE RUDE SUMMIT OF ROUGH TOR CORNWALL PREPARED AT  
LAST FOR UNEASY SLUMBER.

## USEFUL FOR SCHOOLS

THE INSTITUTE has broken fresh ground in its new nine-penny pamphlet, *The Design and Construction of School-made Diascopes and Episcopes* (9d.).

In the first place the projectors dealt with are still-picture projectors, and the publication represents a further step in the Institute's policy of treating still projection and cine projection as closely related matters which must not be arbitrarily kept separate.

In the second place the Institute has not previously published any exact specifications for school-made apparatus or accessories, though of course a number of general hints are given in "Using School Projectors".

The diascope which is described in this pamphlet possesses several interesting features. It is designed for use not only with the standard  $3\frac{1}{4}'' \times 3\frac{1}{4}''$  slides, but also with sub-standard  $2'' \times 2''$  slides and film-strips. This, of course, is a facility which several types of projector now on the market possess, but the greater number of these lose brilliancy by locating the film-strip or film-slide in the same plane as the standard slide and involve extra expenditure by requiring an additional lens for the projection of sub-standard material. The specification given in this leaflet provides for the correct distance of the sub-standard

material from the condensing lenses and solves the projection lens problem very neatly by mounting two "achromatic combinations" in such a way that one can be swung out of action. One combination is used for standard slide projection, giving a focal length of 8" and both combinations together are used for film-strip or film-slide projection, giving a focal length of 4".

Certain components have, of course, to be purchased ready-made, but these are not expensive (under £5 for the diascope and under £6 for the episcopes) and the methods suggested for construction are so simple that the work would fall within the scope of quite young children.

The episcopes is of the type which mounts the object to be projected directly opposite the lens. The use of a translucent screen gives correct orientation of the projected image. The translucent screen has the further advantage of being suitable for use in controlled daylight and the instrument described has been successfully used in classrooms which were far from totally dark.

The pamphlet includes also a list of galleries, museums, and other public institutions which provide slides and postcards suitable for use in school projectors.



# DOUBLE CROSS!

*"Laughter may help to check the bad behaviour in the world," thinks Charlie Chaplin, according to this article by HERMAN G. WEINBERG. And, to point the moral and adorn the tale, the Nazi swastika has been transformed into a double cross throughout his latest film*

THE MOST important American film of the Autumn season will undoubtedly be Charlie Chaplin's long and eagerly awaited *The Great Dictator*. Running two hours and fifteen minutes, costing more than \$2,000,000 and well over two years in production, it represents Chaplin's most ambitious and profound effort to date. Chaplin plays two parts—Hitler and a little Jewish barber who comes to be mistaken for the great dictator. Jack Oakie will be seen in a parody of Mussolini, with Billy Gilbert as the porcine Goering and Reginald Gardiner as one of Hitler's aides. Paulette Goddard will be seen as a laundry girl with whom the barber is in love, and who suffers at the hands of the Double-Cross Troopers. The Nazi swastika has been transformed into a double-cross throughout the film.

## Chaplin's View

"Behind the picture," says Chaplin, in an interview with Robert Van Gelder published in the *New York Times*, "is my belief that laughter may help check the bad behaviour in the world. Leaders with tenth-rate minds have captured the new instruments of propaganda and are using these instruments to destroy good, civilised, kind behaviour. I'm the clown, and what can I do that is more effective than to laugh at these fellows who are putting humanity to the goose-step; who, as I say in one of my first captions, are kicking humanity around?"

"Pessimists say I may fail—that dictators aren't funny any more, that the evil is too serious. That is wrong. If there is one thing that I know, it is that power can always be made ridiculous. The bigger the fellow gets, the harder my laughter will hit him.

"I laugh at the dictators—but they are not inhuman, really, in the picture. At one point, as the Dictator, I do a dance with the world around a big globe that is a map of the world. And there the poor madman is something else than ridiculous; he is one little man with the whole wide, vast unconquerable world, and he thinks the world is his."

## A One-Man Job

Chaplin has again made of *The Great Dictator* a one-man job. He wrote it, designed all the sets, did all the casting, planned all the costumes, directed it, checked every lighting and camera set-up, "and even beat boards together and that kind of thing to make sound effects," reported Van Gelder in his illuminating interview with the great comedian. "Why do I do it?" asked Chaplin. "Because I can't shake off the belief that no one I can employ knows as much about making pictures as I do." He even composed

a great part of the music score, in collaboration with Meredith Wilson, his music director.

In the film, Chaplin will speak for the first time. "So that no one will be shocked by the hitherto unheard voice," reported Van Gelder, "since the curious singing sequence in *Modern Times* is discounted as not really talking, Chaplin is presented as an aphasia victim who has lost voice and memory in the first World War. He at first utters mere sounds, then monosyllables, and finally words." Reports are that the gibberish German Chaplin has devised for his second rôle, as Hitler, in the film, during which he parodies the ravings and rantings and tearing of hair, beating of breast, tears of ecstasy in the voice, of Hitler during one of his political harangues, is hilarious. He has mimicked the paranoiacal gestures with such deftness of observation that Hitler as demagogue stands exposed in the film once and for all as the pathetic charlatan that he is. Jack Oakie, as Mussolini, finally has the great opportunity of his career, under the irony of Chaplin's direction, to do a brilliant and unforgettable job of film satire.

## Hitler Pays!

"On the film," said Van Gelder, "Chaplin as the Dictator steps from a big open car. An officer moves forward and salutes. The camera swings widely to show what appears to be a crowd of at least a million people.

"Where did we get that shot?" asked Chaplin. "Well, where do you think? From Germany! My own fifth column snagged it out of Germany. Hitler is not only my clown. He has also paid some of my production cost. Saved me no end of money. Isn't it wonderful!"

As *Life* magazine so aptly put it, the world's most beloved figure has made a film satirising the world's most hated figure.

*The Great Dictator* promises not only to be the maturest flowering of Chaplin's art, the subtlest and most lyrically beautiful of all his films, but also a shaft of light in the present gloom that will illumine the "good, civilised, kind behaviour" that the forces of darkness are seeking to destroy.

At this moment, and for reasons of which we are, all of us, well enough aware, no other film seems worth mentioning in the same breath with Chaplin's passionate outcry against the Nazi scourge. In the winter number of SIGHT AND SOUND, I hope to review *The Great Dictator*, along with Walt Disney's *Fantasia*, which seems to be the only other film of this season of comparable stature to contribute towards the increase of gaiety, and about time too! among nations.





## EXTRACT FROM A LETTER

One day recently HERBERT KLINE—you remember, he directed “Lights Out in Europe” and “Crisis”—wrote a letter to a friend in England. Dealing with his views on conditions in Mexico, we thought extracts might interest you. The still is from “Time in the Sun”, Marie Seton’s edited version of the spare Eisenstein material

WE ARE driving about Mexico looking for the village which is to be the scene of our new film: this will be a story documentary, not the political documentary of the type of *Lights Out* and *Crisis* that we foresaw before the fall of France brought U.S. intervention in Mexico and ended the likelihood of the rightist Almazan revolt expected after the elections of July 7th.

We listen in Spanish to the news broadcasts of the course of the war, and go about our lives determined to enjoy what may be our last months of real liberty . . . before we too are in khaki. We live in a country where the people maintain their dignity and charm in the face of centuries of poverty and exploitation of a kind unknown in Europe since Russia freed her slaves. We visited an ejido the other day, which had been run by European capitalists for 100 years at great profits . . . they had not built a school in all that time or a hospital . . . as the peasant who was now president of the collective explained: “We did not even have pants . . . we worked in the fields in long shirts . . . forgive us if the office does not seem to work as efficiently as the rest of our collective . . . none of us were ever in an office before, and the students who came to us to keep the books were never on the land before. . . .” We forgave them . . . shamefully . . . that our clothes related us in a way to the world of their “educated” oppressors. We learned that they had increased the rice crop 22 per cent in the two years they had had control, but that banking interests controlled by the former owners had bought up their crop, stored it in hiding, and purchased rice from Japan, which they had sold publicly as proof of the failure of the campesinos and the ejidos. We learned that they had increased their cattle by 500 head in two years, through caring for animals that were now their own. . . .

We learned that in this country out of which American, English, French and German capital has taken huge fortunes, 83 per cent of the people die without a death certificate, that 60 per cent of all babies born die between their 1st and 5th year, that 50,000 babies die of infantile colitis as their parents live so remote from doctors and the few medical centres that they rely on herbcurandos and witch doctors, that women in labour are hung upside down from trees, while their bodies are rubbed with warm oils . . . a hundred dying of this “aid” for every hundred who live in spite of it. This is “THE WAR” we live in here in old Mexico . . . a war in which more babies are killed than by Nazi bombs . . . this is the quiet war of hunger, disease, poverty and justice that multiplies, as in the case of hungry, mistreated post-war Germany, into a militant savagery that turns in hatred against the “civilisation” that spawned it. . . .

As you know, we have lived our lives for four years in the midst of the “little war” of fascism preparing for its big war . . . against the very “civilisation” that encouraged it in fear of socialism . . . but we have never seen anything more terrible (not even in the war hospitals of Spain) than hundreds of children with eye disease that cannot be cured until a second generation as this one is already the product of an environment that will take decades to change . . . the poor little bodies that manage to exist on their diet of corn, beans pulque cannot be made over . . . even though Cardenas is trying to do so by taking over the wealth in oil and lands of foreign owners and using the money for schools, hospitals, travelling rural medical shock troops, etc. Our film will tell this story . . . in terms of a young Mexindian boy who turns from faith in the curandos and witch doctors to his new friends, the visiting medical shock troop that saves the life of his young sister, after the deaths of other children due to the dread “evil” which is finally diagnosed as “colitis” . . . it’s a simple story, beautifully written by Steinbeck, and we are hopeful that our work will live up to it . . . we’ve never directed and filmed a true story film before, so this represents quite a challenge.



# *A Little More Nonsense Please!*

There is a lot to be said for wagging tails without dogs, and cheerful ghosts and hunters who put their quarry to bed, thinks ELIZABETH CROSS. And quite rightly too, because in time of imminent peril a little escapism in our off-duty hours is not foolish but just plain common sense

AT THE RISK of shocking a good many producers whose motto seems to be "Life is real, life is earnest", could I ask them to come off it and use a bit of cinema technique now and then? I'm getting worn down with earthquakes that are just as good and twice as terrifying as real ones, with deserts that make your mouth full of sand, and bombs that make you feel just like home. . . . I'd like to see something that couldn't happen but that would be fun if it did.

## **Merry Laundry Basket**

When I was very young it was the high spot of my existence to go behind the scenes at my father's "Picture Palace" and watch Jimmy (our bootboy and general factotum) blow a motor horn whenever that marvel, the automobile, appeared on the scene. Reality was a triumph then, but at the same time the early film makers did understand that a good measure of sheer nonsense was their monopoly. One of the most delicious of these "vintage" films dealt with a house that did everything for itself, and how the audience loved the way the laundry basket rushed upstairs and unpacked the shirts which floated gracefully into the linen cupboard!

## **And Riotous Ghosts**

I'd like a bit more use made of this sort of thing. The cinema has such wonderful scope for magic it seems a pity to be so miserly over it. Of course the Disney cartoons exploit it but that isn't quite the same thing, you expect a cartoon to make its own world. Think what a success "Topper" was, when two of the main characters (no three, I forgot the dog!) were killed off in the first few moments and thereafter existed as peculiarly riotous ghosts embroiling poor respectable little Roland Young in such embarrassing situations. The nice thought of a ghost dog who sometimes materialised tail first was quite the best thing that has happened in years . . . in fact I swear we had the wag first, then the tail! Now "Topper" was a perfectly normal sort of film (by which obscure statement I mean that it wasn't a cartoon and it wasn't low comedy but did have a lovely glamour girl and a handsome young man and all the appurtenances of gorgeous clothes, butlers and sleek American houses), and it also had a perfectly crazy idea as its centre which only the cinema could exploit successfully.

## **Not to Mention Stags**

To go back into history a bit, do you remember Maurice Chevalier in I can't remember what title (with Jeanette Macdonald singing her head off on a railway track anyway), going hunting stags? Being unaccustomed to horses his animal went with the wind and got well in with the stag, leaving the rest of the field nowhere. He is then discovered

in the little hunting lodge in the woods where he has made the stag very comfortable indeed . . . in fact it is fast asleep when the rest of the folk arrive. Chevalier then goes out, finger on lips, and shoos them gently away saying "Quiet please, the stag 'e is ver' tired . . ." or words to that effect . . . and the whole field turns silently in *slow motion* and floats away on the wings of faery. This unexpected touch in an otherwise conventional film was memorable and we could do with a bit more in that manner.

## **And Tortured Grapes**

Some of the documentaries go in for more "pure" cinematography, which is welcome, but here again they are tending to become conventionalised so that we don't notice the symbolism any more. Part of the charm, or rather the essential charm, of the cinema is that we have a new medium to work with and this doesn't mean merely going all high-brow with shadows and pictures of fat ladies' hands or bunches of grapes looking tortured. The bits of nonsense that are so refreshing are such moments as occur in a perfectly sane domestic film, when the dog hears someone swear or sees something shocking and his ears stick up, click, as if they had invisible wires.

So please, all ye who muck about with films and the making thereof, have a heart and let yourselves go now and then. After all, Shakespeare let up from time to time, even in his most serious efforts, sprinkling a subtle seasoning of wisecracks around Hamlet just so the audience could get their breath ready for a good cry later on. Don't feel that you've got to be funny all the time, but let us have a bit of nonsense here and there. Thanks pal.

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## **TO OUR READERS**

*Once again may we remind those who are not direct postal subscribers or members of the British Film Institute that it is absolutely essential for a regular order to be placed with their newsagent. Indeed, this is the only way to ensure obtaining a copy of SIGHT & SOUND, as war conditions have compelled us, in common with all other periodicals, to discontinue "casual" sales.*





# ORKO

The whole world knows Finland, nation of lakes, brave men and northern lights. Here is the story of one man who, it is claimed, built up the Finnish cinema industry to a proud position. The still is from "Aho and Soldan", one of the most ambitious of Finland's films, while the words are by FRIEDRICH EGE

IT STARTED, of course, long before Orko came on the scene. They had, indeed, been making films professionally in Finland since 1920 and even way back before that one or two nondescript reels had been turned out. But what counts in an art—as I think you will agree—is not the age nor the quantity but only the quality of the performance or work. And so, looking back at the history of Finnish film production, nobody can doubt that the decisive step forward was due to Orko.

Orko has only been in films seven years and entered the industry in his own characteristic way—i.e. as a result of Finland's great social problem, tuberculosis. As a student at Satakunta Orko had come under Professor Mikkola and his wife Maila Talvio, and became fired by their interest in social work. By their own efforts they succeeded in organising a league of students who, through their enthusiasm, managed to get a large sanatorium built. And they thought—why not make a film about this dreadful disease? Difficulties prevented it at the time, but later he was to succeed.

## The Tuberculosis Film

When they did finally make a start Maila Talvio wrote the script and Orko, at the time, of course, more or less inexperienced, undertook to supervise production. The only studios with the technical facilities necessary available were those of Suomi-Filmi and shooting began there. The history of the production of this film reads like a story from the time of the childhood of the cinema in the big countries long, long ago. There were arguments, differences of opinion as regards policy, finally a complete split. In a towering rage Orko bought the rights in the half finished picture from Suomi-Filmi and established a new company with Mr. Erkki Karu. But, although the film was completed, the new alliance did not prosper as Orko's artistic temperament clashed with the more commercially minded Karu.

## And the Results

The heads of Suomi-Filmi, however, were far from being fools. In their shrewd minds they saw a chance of this young, energetic and talented young man establishing the Finnish Film industry on a sound footing. All he needed, they said to themselves, was a little control over his impetuosity. And so, in 1933, they offered Orko—who by this time had given up films in despair and was comfortably established as a lawyer—the position of Director of Productions.

Orko had the courage to burn his boats, throw over his safe job and accept. After installing completely new technical equipment, he made his first picture for Suomi which, shown in Helsinki at the end of the year, was a great success.

He has never looked back. Unyielding will, great energy, clear, far-reaching intellect and instinctive "film sense" have carried his work forward until Suomi-Filmi became the dominant factor in Finnish cinema.

On his many trips abroad Orko has made a point of studying technical as well as artistic developments and under his leadership Finnish studios can claim to be as well equipped on their own scale as any in the world. Unlike many artistic people, his motto has always been: it is impossible to produce good work unless one has the tools with which to do it. With this in view, he has trained cameramen and directors and continuously encouraged young talent.

In short, anyone studying the history of the film in Finland must realise that it is due to him—and almost solely to him—that the cinema in that small country has at length found its feet and that its films are taking a not unhonoured place on the screens not only of all Scandinavia but of the United States as well.



# THE WIND IN INDIA

Some observations by K. Ahmad Abbas, Motion Picture Editor of the "Bombay Chronicle". American rights in this article are reserved to the Author

*Gone With The Wind*, the Selznik opus, that has just concluded a four-weeks' run at the Metro Theatre, hit a new high in foreign film trade in India.

Heralded by what the local publicists like to call "a gala première" at which the red carpet spread for the Governor's wife, the Indian frescoes that decorate the walls of this otherwise typically American theatre and the rainbow colours of the *saris* worn by the ladies combined to present as impressive a spectacle as the Technicolor effects of the picture itself, *The Wind* continued to draw the crowds for twenty-eight days—two shows a day, three on holidays! The total income netted by the distributors, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (India) Ltd., is said to be in the neighbourhood of 25,000 dollars, which is more than any other picture, foreign or Indian, has ever grossed in an equal period.

## Downward Grade

To those used to the astronomical figures of American show business, the sum of 25,000 dollars may strike as nothing to rave about. In India, however, the standard of living is low and even at a swell theatre like Metro the prices of seats range from 10 cents to a dollar. Not every foreign picture can make 25,000 dollars even in a year's run all over the country! And with the steadily improving product of the indigenous film industry, the foreign picture market is definitely on a downward grade.

There was a time, ten years go, when any foreign picture—and, in eighty cases out of a hundred, it meant an American picture—could draw crowds of English-educated Indians, easily impressed by anything foreign and unduly critical of the somewhat crude Indian films. To-day, however, the situation is different. The better class of Indian movies is as good as a good American picture and certainly better than the average British film. Production budgets are low, even much lower than in France, and an average India talkie does not cost much more than what *Gone With The Wind* made during its four-weeks' run at a single theatre in Bombay. Correspondingly, as I have already hinted, theatre seats are cheap, prices in most small towns ranging from 5 cents to a quarter dollar. In some villages where "touring talkies" are shown admission charge is sometimes as low as a couple of cents! With only 1,300 theatres in the whole country, it is not difficult to see why it is regarded as an amazing achievement when a picture makes 300,000 dollars (only about three pictures have made that much). The average is about 50,000 dollars per picture.

## Long Runs

Tell an average Indian cine-goer that *Gone With The Wind* ran for four weeks in Bombay and he will remain completely unimpressed. Picture runs in India are reckoned not in days or weeks but in months. *Tukaram*, the biographical film of a saint's life, ran at a single theatre in Bombay for exactly a year, and since then it has been running in the city at one theatre or another practically for the last three years! At least a dozen pictures in the year achieve a run of over 20 weeks in one or more of the

principal cities. Besides pictures like *Tukaram* with a popular religious appeal, what appeals most to Indian audiences is the simple sentimental story with a moral attached to it. Pictures with particular appeal for women are most successful as in that case not only the women flock to see it again and again but they insist on the whole family going with them.

Foreign pictures, particularly good American pictures, however, have still a fairly good market over here. A number of British pictures are imported but they are seldom popular. Last year we in Bombay saw only one Russian, one Italian, one French and one Czech picture! Even these were seen more for the sake of novelty than anything else.

## Popular Films

*Gone With The Wind* has no doubt broken box-office records by collecting 25,000 dollars in four weeks. But several Hollywood pictures have had longer runs in Bombay. *The Life of Emile Zola* ran for six continuous weeks in its very first run and though it did not make so much money it was seen by far more people than saw *The Wind*. It is interesting to recall that thousands who saw it did not understand a word of English dialogue and went to see the picture only because they had read in the vernacular papers that it dealt with the life of a humanitarian and fighter for justice. Indian cine-goers are not used to watching pictures in stony silence and socially significant pictures like *Louis Pasteur*, *Blockade*, *Juarez*, *Mr. Smith Goes To Washington*, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, etc., are applauded every time they are flashed on the screen. Like any other country, India too has all classes of cine-goers. Clark Gable and Mickey Mouse, Laurel and Hardy and Mickey Rooney, Shirley Temple and Greta Garbo, they are all popular. Among recent box-office successes are such diverse films as *Robin Hood* and *Bachelor Mother*, *Broadway Melody* and *Ninotchka*. But on the whole it can be said that a picture with a democratic ideal or with a theme concerning social justice is a sure-fire hit in India. Being in the throes of political regeneration, the people of India are naturally more easily inspired by the words of Juarez and Zola than by the wisecracks of comics or the amorous kiss close-ups of Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh.

*Gone With The Wind*, in its initial run, scored in Bombay because of the fashionable crowd turning up—one could not move in the local smart "society" without being asked if one had seen the picture—but I must say it left the mass of the people rather cold and even disappointed. They admired the superb technical qualities, the brilliant acting by the principal characters, but they missed something purposeful and inspiring in it. You see, we of India, are not taken up by the sophisticated subtleties of characters like Scarlett O'Hara.

In our naïve way, we prefer to see a character like Juarez, a Pasteur, a Zola, a Mr. Deeds, a Mr. Smith and hear him speak of the ideals that we cherish and admire. I might end by quoting the remark that a public leader made on seeing *Juarez*: "If India had a national government, this picture would be shown free in every school in the country."



# FILMS FOR FUTURITY

**The National Film Library's New Storage Vaults at Aston Clinton described by H. D. WALEY, Technical Director of the British Film Institute**

THE NATIONAL Film Library's new vaults at Aston Clinton are the first buildings to be constructed in this country for the special purpose of preserving films over a long period.

The preservation of films even for the ordinary short-term purposes of the picture theatres is, of course, a sufficiently complicated affair owing to the extreme inflammability of celluloid. Drastic regulations cover the handling, packing and housing of the films. But the problems which are raised by schemes for long-term preservation are more formidable still. Photographic images on a celluloid base are inherently perishable objects. Exactly how perishable no one can yet say with any certainty, for photographic images of any kind have only existed for about a hundred years and celluloid for about fifty. Already, however, the fading of photographs and the disintegration of celluloid are sufficiently common occurrences to indicate the kind of danger which besets films when an attempt is made to preserve them even for a few years. Accordingly the British Film Institute, when undertaking the foundation of a National Film Library for the preservation of films of importance for the longest possible period sought the guidance of the British Kinematograph Society who appointed a committee of experts to consider the problems involved. This committee issued its report in 1934 and it is on its findings that the measures which are now being carried into effect are based. It will be convenient to consider these measures under the following headings: (1) vaults, (2) containers, (3) films.

With regard to the vaults themselves the following considerations arise in addition to those specified by statute, the temperature, the humidity, and the isolation of one reel from another in case of fire. The temperature requires control with two objects, firstly to prevent the vaults from becoming too warm and secondly to prevent rapid changes. Actually the temperature which would be most suitable for the storage of celluloid with a view to guarding against its spontaneous decomposition would be so low that it could not be maintained without artificial refrigeration. The expense of installing and maintaining refrigeration is high and it was accordingly decided to concentrate on maintaining the stability of the temperature. The method adopted was simple, and, as it turned out, highly successful. Each block of twelve vaults is insulated from the outer air by an enclosed air-space containing electric heating apparatus. The heating apparatus is switched on and off by automatic controls. The installation was only completed in the early spring of this year and consequently winter observations are not yet available, but since the scheme provides ample artificial heating, but no cooling is available except by adjustable ventilators, the possibility that the temperature might rise unduly in the summer has been our main anxiety. Actually the summer has been well up to the average in hot spells, but the internal temperature of the

vaults has never reached 70° Fahrenheit. Nor have the diurnal fluctuations of temperature ever reached the 5° Fahrenheit determined on in our plans as the maximum permissible.

The question of containers was a difficult one. The ordinary commercial film-container is of tinned iron and therefore liable to rust. Aluminium, bakelite and stove-enamelled iron were all considered but rejected on the ground of expense. Finally the economical compromise was decided upon of using ordinary containers and wrapping each reel in waxed paper.

After the questions of what sort of containers one should put the films in and what sort of vault one should put the containers in there still remained the question of treatment for the actual films. It was clearly useless to lock up in elaborate vaults any films which had been inadequately processed, and also most necessary to keep a check on the condition of the celluloid base of each film. It was certain that inadequately processed films would become discoloured and faded and that, especially in the case of very old films, the celluloid base might become so fragile and shrunken that copying would be difficult. Accordingly it was decided to apply to each film at the outset a sodium sulphide spot test for satisfactory fixation and an azide test for satisfactory washing. At intervals the condition of the celluloid base is to be determined by a "stability" test. That is to say, small samples will be raised to a definite temperature and the period noted which elapses before complete combustion. Each reel will be taken out of its container, re-wound and tested for stability once every twelve months, and this inspection will provide an opportunity for discarding any film-tins which may be beginning to rust and for noting any unforeseen changes in the condition of the films.

In conclusion, this may be an appropriate place for registering the Institute's thanks to those who have given their time and thought to guiding this project. In the first place we have to thank the original British Kinematograph Society Committee which was constituted as follows:

Mr. S. Rowson (Chairman), Mr. I. D. Wratten, Mr. W. R. Webb, Mr. Jno. W. Smith, Mr. F. R. Renwick, Mr. Cecil M. Hepworth, Mr. J. A. Hall, Mr. G. R. Davies.

Their work has been carried on by a British Kinematograph Society Committee on Film Preservation consisting of:

Dr. G. B. Harrison, Ph.D., F.R.P.S., Mr. E. Oram, Mr. T. H. Williamson, Mr. I. D. Wratten.

While the British Kinematograph Society Committees have laid down for our guidance the general principles involved the working out of the practical details has fallen upon the Technical Sub-Committee of the National Film Library which is constituted as under:

Mr. S. Rowson (Board of Trade) Chairman, Mr. A. Barclay (Science Museum), Mr. J. G. Hughes-Roberts, O.B.E. (Government Cinematograph Adviser), Mr. S. A. Ashmore (Government Laboratory), Mr. E. H. Warren (Government Laboratory), Dr. D. A. Spencer (Kodak Research Laboratory.)

Valuable assistance has also been given by Mr. Raymond White, F.R.I.B.A., of Aylesbury, who designed the structure of the vaults, Mr. H. D. Barlow, A.M.I.E.E., who designed the electrical equipment, and Dr. H. Baines (Kodak Research Laboratory), who placed at the Library's disposal the conclusions drawn from his researches on fixation and washing.



# NOSTALGIA

**What is required is a re-survey of the whole field of film Technique, thinks ERNEST H. LINDGREN, Research Officer of the National Film Library**

A FEW DAYS ago I was looking through some copies of *Close-Up* and *Cinema Quarterly*. If I had been turning the leaves of early Victorian volumes of *The Illustrated London News* my escape from this world of lunatic terror in which we strive to continue life's normalities could hardly have been more complete. *Close-Up* ran as a quarterly from 1928 to 1932, and *Cinema Quarterly* from 1932 to 1935. There have been other film magazines since, *Sight and Sound*, of course, the most enduring of them all. But these two, together with the arty *film art* (minuscules, compositor, please) represent a single complete period of film criticism: a period of daring experiment and often too-daring theorising, a period of æsthetic ferment. Its zenith was only ten years ago and yet how quaintly out-moded it all seems now.

A paragraph from the pen of Eugene Deslaw catches the straying eye: "Certain sounds recorded during an ordinary production of a news reel add absolutely nothing to the value of the image, are too uniform. We are plunged into the already heard, into the least exciting of sound realism. It was as a remedy to this . . . that I made . . . *Le Monde en Parade*. I wanted in this film to obtain a synthesis of noise and to change sound, which until now had been a simple matter of curiosity into a lyrical or psychological factor. It was necessary to arrange sounds round images . . ." Eisenstein has a dissertation on *The Principles of Film Form*: "The task of Art is—the bringing to light of the conflicts of the Existing. By the awakening of conflicts in the observer. The emotional forging of a correct intellectual concept by the dynamic collision of contrasted passions. The formation thus of correct perception." It was the age of the great god Montage, a god whom the theorists too often imaged each according to the promptings of his own wild and woolly imagination (and amongst them all, an arch-atheist, G. F. Dalton, who, after scornfully quoting the solemn definitions of various and conflicting high-priests, concludes "There is no such thing as montage"). It was the age when Robert Herring, editing a volume of stills called *Films of the Year 1927-8*, could analyse them in such terms as these: "The main pyramid of the design consists of the two pyramids of the mother and the swung cradle, linked by the hand."

Quaint though they now appear, these film periodicals did represent what was in many ways one of the most exciting and vital periods of the cinema—the period when it first became fully conscious of its potentialities as an art form. The movement was one which had begun on the Continent many years previously with the production of a number of outstanding films which had relied to a considerable extent on the older arts for both inspiration and technique (as, in Sweden literature, in Germany painting, in France the two together). Herring was justified in analysing a still in terms of a Royal Academy picture, because it was precisely on such pictorial models that some directors then composed their shots: one has only to remember the precisely formal and balanced compositions in Fritz Lang's *Siegfried*.

Yet the quaint out-modedness of these old film papers is only a first reaction. When surprise has subsided, and given place to familiar recollections, there comes a feeling of nostalgia. We become aware, alas, that the film society movement, strangled, one may say, by the success of the very principles for which it stood, has long since lost its pristine glory: that the documentary movement would have entirely lost its identity in the maw of commercialism had it not breathed new inspiration from the Continent through the work of Cavalcanti, the only genuine artist working on any scale in the British cinema to-day: that *Close-Up* and *Cinema Quarterly*, in short, represent a sharply-defined, unified epoch, which has passed away; an epoch stirred by an impulse which can never return in its old form, nor perhaps, in any form while we live under the grim shadow of war.

Regret, however, need not dim hope. The shadow will pass, and out of the ruins and out of that human misery and fear which now imprison the spirit, a new renaissance will burst forth: so much we are encouraged to hope by what followed the last Great War. Those of us who have faith in the future of the cinema know that it is too big to be dammed by even world-war: its progress is merely interrupted. The old tasks still remain: to encourage the development of the film in the services of art and of education, and to that end to establish principles of film technique which will provide a solid foundation for sound criticism.

To many this aim, thus consciously avowed, has always seemed ridiculously presumptuous: those who are plunged in the day-to-day task of making films, in particular, tend to be contemptuously scornful of what they regard as the monstrous regiment of arm-chair æsthetics and pedantic uplifters: and not without some justification. The craftsmen in the film, it is argued, like those in any other art, will establish their own canons, and the critic must needs come following after, with no greater task than to build his theories on what has already been done.

Although there is much reason in such a contention it ignores the fact that the film director is far more dependent on public approbation than any other kind of artist whatsoever. He cannot work effectively without an army of collaborators, and the hundreds or thousands of pounds required to maintain them: the public pays, and the public calls the tune. "I hope in time to have more freedom still," said Alfred Hitchcock, "if my audience will give it to me." The whole value of the film art movement in Britain was that, amid all its precious highbrowism and nonsense, it helped to create and to keep alive the nucleus of an intelligent film-going public which was interested in new experiments and would support good films.

The need for continuing to stimulate public interest in good films, and to encourage an intelligent appraisal of film craftsmanship will be as vital after the war as it was at any time before it, if the cinema is to fulfil its proper function in the development of post-war society. I have no doubt that a foremost part will be taken in this work by a kind of study which has already found a footing in some of our schools, and which is slowly but surely spreading: the study of film appreciation.

Recent investigations undertaken by the British Film Institute have shown that many teachers are aware of the value of film appreciation and would like to encourage it, but hardly know how the job should be tackled. Such hesitation is natural in those who have not been led by a personal enthusiasm for cinema to soak themselves in its



atmosphere for years: but it suggests that the first and most urgent need is to teach the teachers.

What is required is a re-survey of the whole field of film technique. Much pseudo-aesthetic rubbish was written in *Close-Up* and the rest, but amidst it all there was much critical common sense, too; a genuine striving by film workers to discover and communicate the fundamentals of their craft. What we need to do, and what we are now in a position to do, is to sort the wheat from the chaff, the good sense from the rubbish, and thus to establish, as far as possible, the tenets of a sound theory of film criticism.

Such a theory would be unmarred by the extravagances of over-zealous and one-sided partisanship. While the primary importance of editing would still be maintained, for example, Pudovkin's conception of editing as the creating of significance by the synthesis of shots which by themselves are dead and meaningless would be recognised as biased and, in practice, leading to an over-static style: the shot, too, has its value though subordinate to the significance of the whole. Such out-moded theories as that camera-movement interferes with editing would also be discarded, and the predominance or absence of camera-movement recognised at the most as a mark of personal style.

Finally, and most importantly, such a theory could and should be continually measured against actual examples of outstanding film workmanship. What helped, perhaps, more than any other single factor, to make the old film theorising so airy and unsound was that often the examples quoted and analysed were from films which the writer had seen once only in some more or less distant past. There was seldom any possibility of countering the deficiencies of malobservation and imperfect memorisation by direct reference to actual films.

If a new and more scholarly era of film criticism is to dawn it will owe most to the work of the national film libraries, of which the two chief now are the Museum of Modern Art Film Library in New York and our own National Film Library in London. Both are concerned to collect and preserve films which are technically outstanding and which have played an important part in the cinema's development (films which one may shortly describe, without undue presumption, as classics of the film), and to make them available to schools and to students of the film generally. It is not, perhaps, going too far to regard Lewis Jacobs's recent book, *The Rise of the American Film* as the first essay in this new school of criticism. His scholarship and his sense of proportion (which one admires the more because, though not uncommon in other fields, they are exceedingly so in film writing) is due in great measure to a careful re-examination and re-evaluation of important films made accessible to him at the New York Film Library.

The National Film Library's Loan Section already has over forty films suitable for film appreciation work, from *The Great Train Robbery* to *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, from *Nanook of the North* to *Song of Ceylon* and *The River*. Others are being added even during the war. By the time this appears, it is hoped that *Potemkin*, *Mother*, and other important Soviet films will be likewise available. Most of them can be had in 16 mm. copies as well as 35 mm. All can be borrowed at reasonable rates of hire.

The study of film history is one of the most effective ways to the study of film technique. A group of films showing technical progress from the early primitives, taken in monotonous static long-shot, to D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*, to go no further, illustrates not only the development

of editing but also its nature and function. Again, the essential differences between film and theatre could hardly be more pointedly demonstrated than by contrasting an early "art-film" (in effect a photographed stage play) such as Sarah Bernhardt's *Lady of the Cameliass*, with a reel from *The Last Laugh* of Murnau.

An effective film appreciation movement would not only salvage all that was best in the old days of the film art periodicals; it would convey it to a far wider circle, to the schools and their teachers, who mould the tastes of the audiences of to-morrow.

## CATALOGUING THE NATIONAL FILM LIBRARY

An article which follows naturally on the one above, also by E. H. LINDGREN

THE IDEA OF a national film library in being is still so novel that I am frequently beset with questions by the curious as to "how it works". Next to the questions "How are the films selected?" and "Do you keep them in hermetically sealed tins?" perhaps the most popular (and certainly the most practical) query is "How are the films you collect made accessible to the public?"

This question of accessibility is considerably more complicated in the case of a film library than in the case of a library of books. In the British Museum Library, for example, the student, once properly accredited and equipped with his ticket, finds the books he wants through the Library's cataloguing system and they are then brought to him. Unfortunately, there are all sorts of practical difficulties which prevent a film being made available so easily. In comparison with its content and the time required for perusal, a film is very much heavier and more bulky than a book; it cannot be examined without a viewing apparatus, either a projector or movieola, and in both cases the attendance of a qualified technician is either desirable or essential; films cannot be stored on open shelves, but must be kept in specially constructed fire-proof vaults which may be some distance away from the place of viewing; and, finally, a film is very much more susceptible to decay than a book, and the wear and tear sustained during projection, especially if repeated frequently, is likely to be particularly injurious.

The last of these factors is ordinarily by far the most important. The only way it could be overcome is by having duplicate prints of every film, one a master copy and the other an examination print. This the National Film Library is certainly not able to do at the moment, and if it ever should become so opulent as to be able to consider such a course, it is still doubtful whether it could be justified in view of the enormous storage space which would be required.

The Library Committee have rightly laid it down, therefore, that no print of a film being stored for preservation, after it has once been examined for cataloguing purposes, can under any circumstances be projected. This restriction is sometimes found irksome by those using the Library. Indeed, there are occasions when a film company, which may itself have donated films to the Library's collection, expresses a desire to see certain material projected, and



when it becomes extremely embarrassing to have to insist on a refusal. The rule is rigidly observed, however, and those who are disappointed can usually be persuaded to appreciate its necessity.

There are certain films, however, which have so wide an interest among students of the cinema, that it becomes justifiable to print duplicate prints for projection purposes. This applies particularly to films so important in film history that they have a particular value for film appreciation work. Such films are made available in both 16 mm. and 35 mm. prints and the National Film Library has a special department, its Loan Section, which is concerned with despatching these films, both singly and in arranged programmes, to schools, institutes and societies of various kinds. At the moment, these films are available only to members of the British Film Institute, but it is hoped to make them accessible to a wider public in the near future, with members enjoying the privilege of a reduced hiring fee.

The Loan Section still represents only a fraction of the Library's collection, however, somewhat comparable to the proportion of an iceberg which appears above the water. There still remains the necessity of catering for the single research worker, the historian of the cinema, or the student of modern social history, who wishes to consult the other and larger part of the Library. Such research workers are rare out of all proportion to their importance and it is therefore possible, by observing two main restrictions, to serve their needs without impairing the Library's efficiency. In the first place, facilities are given only to such students if they are equipped with proper credentials. Secondly, since the wear and tear caused by certain types of movieola is negligible compared to that caused by a projector, they can only be allowed to see films on the National Film Library's movieola which has been approved for the purpose.

Before the student (or film producer or director) can begin to work, however, it is essential that he should know what is in the Library and how to find his way about the material. Already it amounts to some five million feet of film, and is growing rapidly, and the happy time when the officials of the Library could carry its contents in their head has long since passed. In short, it became necessary to adopt some definite system of cataloguing and indexing; or rather not so much "adopt" as "work out", since it soon became obvious that systems in use for the cataloguing of books could not be applied automatically to the cataloguing of films.

It is common, for example, particularly in open access libraries, to arrange the books on the shelves in some kind of subject order (often grouped under the Dewey system or some variation of it). Not only is the open access principle impossible for film libraries, but the weight and bulk of films, and the fact that they have to be stored in small vaults of standard size, make it quite impracticable to store them in any sort of subject order. Secondly, in cataloguing books it is usual to make the main entry an author-entry, but the making of a film is nearly always a co-operative business, and there is no one, not even the director, who can correspond in importance to the author of a book.

There was no guide to be obtained from previous attempts to catalogue films since no other organisation had tackled the problem on a scale comparable to that contemplated by the National Film Library. What was required was an entirely new application of cataloguing principles.

It was decided, in the first place, that films should be

numbered as they were acquired and stored in numerical order. That is to say, the last film acquired has the highest catalogue number and is placed last on the Library's vault shelves. In addition to the main catalogue number a system of lettering is used to denote separate reels. Thus, if a three-reel film is given the number 320, the first reel is marked 320 AC, the second 320 BC, and the third 320 CC. By this means it is easy to tell whether a single reel has been removed and, if so, which one.

Turning from the method of storage to the method of cataloguing it was decided that the author-entry in the book cataloguing system (carrying, in the standard form, the title of the book, collation and imprint) should be replaced by a method of title entry, which would carry the following information in addition to the title:

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| (1) Title of film.            | (15) Whether positive or negative, dupe or original.   |
| (2) Country of production.    | (16) Whether flam. or non-flam.  |
| (3) Date of production.       | (17) Condition of print.   |
| (4) Distributors.             | (18) Manner of acquisition.  |
| (5) Censor's certificate.     | (19) Date of acquisition.  |
| (6) Producer.                 | (20) Description of contents reels by reel with special reference to important subject matter. |
| (7) Distributor.              | (21) References to contemporary trade reviews.   |
| (8) Other production staff.   | (22) Index number (e.g. 162F, the letter denoting a six-reel film as explained above).         |
| (9) Cast.                     |  |
| (10) Length in feet.          |  |
| (11) Width of film.           |  |
| (12) Whether sound or silent. |  |
| (13) Sound system.            |  |
| (14) Colour system (if any).  |  |

The use of the title of the film as the heading for the main entry card was adopted as being the only feature which could fill the place of the author's name in ordinary cataloguing. These main entry cards are, of course, arranged in alphabetical order in the usual way.

In addition, it was decided that as in the case of book libraries there should be a subject catalogue arranged alphabetically in which such information would be indexed as the names of directors and other production staff, names of producers and producing firms, names of cast and subject contents. Thus, to take a hypothetical example, the following group of entries might be found in this subject catalogue under G.:

- GANCE, ABEL (director)—*Napoleon*. 534 M.  
 GANGES, RIVER—*Kamet Conquered*. 169 BF.  
 GARBO, GRETA (actress)—*Marie Walewska*. 438 L.  
                                   —*Mata Hari*. 79 G.  
 GEESE—*Bath Time at the Zoo*. 508 C.  
 GERSTAD, MERRITT (cameraman)—*The Great Ziegfeld*. 210 L.  
 GRUNE, KARL (producer)—*Strolling Players*. 134 F.

With the aid of these two indexes, the alphabetical list of titles and the subject catalogue, it is believed that any piece of information about the contents of the Library can be easily and quickly located. It should be added, however, that the compilation of the catalogue is still in its preliminary stages and is therefore capable of adaptation. The task is an important one and in view of the absence of precedent cannot be too carefully undertaken. I must therefore conclude by saying that if any interested person reading these notes feels that he can help us with suggestions we shall be most grateful to receive them.



# DUBLIN TO KILLARNEY

The success of an experiment described by LIAM Ó LAOGHAIRE, President of the Irish Film Society

ONE OF THE outstanding developments in Irish social life will be the establishment of a native Cinema. Before this will happen much initial preparation will have to be done. Economically the field is small so that the maximum effect must be extracted from the minimum of material. Waste such as so often occurs in larger and more prosperous film industries must be avoided. In a comparatively young State new ideas need the largest possible amount of propaganda and the old ideas which form the theoretical backbone of the nation must be related to modern conditions—in other words, be made a living force. It is to the cinema that we look for such presentation and illumination of the facts of our National existence.

## No Vision

Hitherto, isolated and individual efforts have shown courage but scarcely vision. About the year 1924 several films were manufactured here which met with an immediate local response, and being silent were a more economic proposition than more recent efforts. Amongst silent films were *The Life of St. Patrick*, *Willy Reilly*, based on a romantic novel of Lover's, and *Knockna-Gow*, based on Kickham's study of Irish life at the end of the last century. Another film, *Irish Destiny*, dealt with contemporary events and included a spectacular burning of the Dublin Custom House.

With the coming of the talkie the possibilities of combining Irish song and scenery led to the exploitation of these elements in the films of Col. Victor Haddick, who afterwards joined forces with Richard Hayward of Belfast, and the latter is now one of the few figures left in the realm of Irish Film production. *The Early Worm*, *Devil's Rock* and *Where the River Shannon Flows* have been the outstanding contributions of the Hayward unit which, however, has no local laboratories or studio. *The Islandman* (West of Kerry) was another part-local effort and the well-known Irish comedian, Jimmy O'Dea, has turned out several films, notably *Blarney*.

## Dawn in Killarney

What seemed the most hopeful sign at the time was when a Killarney garage proprietor, Mr. Tom Cooper, and his Merry Men, set about the production of *The Dawn* at their self-contained laboratory and studio in Killarney. This film had a spontaneous freshness in its action and an immediate appeal in its subject which dealt with the Black-and-Tan war in Ireland. It had all the freedom of movement of a Western and its players were naïvely and refreshingly themselves. Under the conditions of its manufacture the technical qualities were surprisingly good, and the film remains the only one worth remembering of our past output. Because, alas, the subsequent film from this group had little to recommend it and nothing further has been heard of the Unit.

It would appear that most of these efforts have been embarked on without the necessary study of the nature of the Film, its technical requirements, its need for efficient

and economic organisation and its social repercussions. Above all, the existence of a highly efficient and often artistically worth-while foreign product is not sufficiently appreciated in relation to native efforts, which, however much they may be helped by local appeal and social considerations, must have the driving force of personal expression and the technical standards of the films now in possession of the cinemas.

## The Film Society

One of the most hopeful signs for the Film in Eire has been the great success enjoyed by the Film Society. The aims of this Society have been directed to the development of Film Appreciation and the study of the problems of Film Production. Its Dublin Branch has close on five hundred members, and this season it hopes to have its first Provincial Branch opened at Cork.

Founded in 1936 by a group who had shown some sub-standard films to a Little Theatre Movement, the Society started its career under grave handicaps. There were no films of any artistic merit to be had in the Country, and it was impossible to import films owing to the heavy import duty. Questions of Censorship and Entertainment Tax also loomed large, and there was also the slight suspicion of tainted moral and political affiliations to be overcome. In the early days we had been rash enough to show *Battleship Potemkin* and precipitated a *succes-de-scandale* involving the official veto on further showings, headlines on the posters of a local weekly and a two-months session of Press Controversy.

For the first three years we used sub-standard copies of such films as *Cinderella*, *Caligari*, *Westfront 1918*, *Medieval Village*, *Hey Rup*, etc.; we gave occasional lectures which got a lot of Press Publicity, and we kept hammering away at the job of getting all obstacles to the free import and showing of standard sound films, cleared. We started life with forty members paying an annual subscription of five shillings. We started our second and third seasons with one hundred members paying one guinea subscription. At about this time we had about reached the end of our tether for films, when the unexpected happened. A notice was received from the Revenue Commissioners saying that a special clause was being introduced into the 1939 Finance Bill granting us permission to import any film we required for showing to our Society. Immediately Mr. Edward Toner and myself set about preparing for a Fourth Season on a more ambitious scale than ever. We were lucky to find the newly built Classic Cinema available to us for Saturday afternoons. We opened with *Kermesse Heroique* which got tremendous publicity and the membership of the Society began to mount fast. Other films which we showed last Season included *The Cheat*, *Les Disparus de St. Agil*, *Ewige Maske*, *The River*, *Dood Water*, *La Grande Illusion*, *Janosik*, *Quai des Brumes* and *Tapisserie de France*. As well as the Film programmes we held two Conferences on the subject of Child Education and the Film at which well-known public figures spoke on different aspects. Mr. Ernest Blythe spoke on the *Film and Gaelic*, Miss Gavan Duffy spoke on *Visual Aids*, Mr. Coote of the Civics Institute, spoke on *Child Recreation and the Film*, and various other speakers, teachers and pupils gave their views.

It is rather gratifying to realise as we prepare our plans for our Fifth Season that we have helped to create a strong and effective publicity for ideas that we hope to see utilised when Eire has her own native Film Industry.



# "THEIR OWN PLACE SO TRUE"

*The films described in this article are known wherever good geographical pictures are used. Here W. S. GEORGE describes how he made them in Harris of the Hebrides*

WHEN I FIRST saw the Blue Mountains of Harris, with the tiny crofts and patches of cultivated land, I knew that here was camera stuff, and I am sure that these first impressions were right. The shock of the strange landscape is invigorating to the visual senses, and the mighty masses of cloud and those marvellous miles of gleaming sands call for the camera. Another factor was in the people themselves; in one film, for example, I portrayed the tiny township of Grenetote in North Uist, and here I was struck by the undoubted grace of the people at work. The old lady of the house worked unceasingly and her sensitive actions in the skilful crafts were remarkable. The slow rhythmic passing of the day's work was portrayed in the film *The Outer Isles*.

A third reason why I filmed in these remote islands was one born of my own outlook and work. I am interested in the Outer Isles because of the economic aspect, for their life is simple and hard, but the influence of the modern world is extending. We see the export of human material and the decay ofcrofting, depopulation goes on and in extreme cases whole townships and islands are deserted. This theme of depopulation and isolation from the more comfortable world has been well described in *The Edge of the World*, but I do not believe that this is the whole story, since against the hopelessness there is the urge of the native to return to his own land with its beauty and serenity. This is the crux of the problem, if there was work and some industrial development depopulation would cease.

The films I have already produced are: *To the Notched Isle*, a film of Eigg, Inner Hebrides. This touches on the problem of depopulation. *The Outer Isles I.*; a general geographical survey of North Uist. *The People of the Machair*, or *The Outer Isles II.*; this is the story of the daily round of a machair (sandy plain) township typical of the western seaboard of the Hebrides. *They are Forsaken* is a story of the eastern coast of the islands. Of these films, *People of the Machair* and *They are Forsaken* were "shot" on 35 mm., the former being one reel and the latter two; the other films are on 16 mm.

My film making was mostly during the summer holidays. On the whole the weather was good, and in some years exceptionally good. The light was clear, and there were many days of freedom from haze. The film used was Selo Supersensitive 16 mm and Kodak XI. grey backed for 35 mm. On most occasions I was prepared to stay until all the film was taken and in all cases the film was used before time was up.

Equipment included, in addition to film cameras and tripod, a photo-electric light meter, a changing bag and a box of very essential oddments. These were stiff brush for camera cleaning, screwdriver, selvyt cleaning cloth for lenses, tape measure, filters, and adhesive tape. As the 35 mm. camera works with cassettes holding 80 feet, a changing bag is most useful. The first 35 mm. film was made with meagre equipment. I had no tripod nor changing

bag; film was changed at night in a bed and this was not easy.

Detailed arrangements have to be made with regard to accommodation. I have found that in order to be in close touch with the people I am filming it is necessary to stay with the family. The required introductions I obtained through the help and courtesy of Mr. J. Galloway who was an excise officer in the islands. The language difficulty was overcome by the ready help of the crofters with whom I stayed.

To turn to the actual production, I have always a rough idea of the film before I set out, often making a preliminary expedition in order to secure this. When on the spot the next procedure is to establish contacts and begin a first visualisation, and this is facilitated by the sketching of proposed scenes. Gradually the film evolves in one's mind, but actual photography of the scenes may commence before the whole is visualised, although this only begins when one sequence or chapter is complete.

I consider that the most successful aspect of my work has been the handling of the people at their daily tasks. This was because I understood the work processes and crafts. It was no use standing with the camera and directing persons as this led to the people becoming self-conscious. Filming was a long and patient business, and throughout I bore in mind that the paramount consideration was the people and their work. Although I was conscious of the form of the film, and the links of the scenes, I let the natural actions of the characters set the form of the composition within the frame.

When I return home to edit and complete the film I see the "rushes" through many times, and then take scissors and cut up the film. As the scenes are cut they are placed in order on a clothes line around the room, and when this is done I place my editing table in the middle to pick up the strips and join them together. This rough-cut copy so formed is shown out mainly for criticism. Criticisms are carefully considered, as I find that those who have never seen the location take nothing for granted, while I am inclined to make the film intelligible to myself and not to an audience.

The film is now recast in the light of the criticism and in the case of silent versions the titles are devised and made. The film is cut more carefully and once more shown. Again more alterations might be necessary, but the primary concern is now whether the film is clear and whether it runs smoothly. I often try films out at school as my pupils are severely critical.

Subsequent work is now the finer cutting; this done the film is left for some time and then reshown. It is now ready.

When *The People of the Machair* was shown in Glasgow, several people of the township made the long journey in order to see the film. One of them wrote to me and said "that the film was grand because it was their own place so true." I regard this film as true documentary.



# SCRIPT WRITING AND THE TEACHING FILM

Some hints from WILLIAM HUNTER, Director of the Dartington Hall Film Unit

The non-professional film maker, in the early stages of his career, will probably find photography the most thrilling, as well as the most difficult aspect of production. His major headaches are likely to be due to such things as variability of exposure from shot to shot, unsteady pans, and jerky tilts. This stage passes, or should do, and the problems relating to script become, not only the most difficult, but also the most fascinating. I would say that the script is the most important single factor in the success or failure of a teaching film. As, given the very drastic decline in the output of teaching films since the war, it may become increasingly important that teachers should make their own teaching films, and that amateurs in general should turn their talents from imitation studio work to a more functional type of film, the following notes on this specialised work may be of value, for two reasons. Firstly because this has now, after five years trial and error, become for us a more or less stereotyped method of approach to production problems. Most of the errors I adjure you in this article to avoid and many more have been committed by myself and my helpers over the past five years. Secondly, they may be useful because we have just completed a film conceived and shot under the abnormal conditions of war on a subject having nothing to do with the war.

## War-time Difficulties

Whatever type of film is attempted out-of-doors now, difficulties relating to the war will inevitably arise. Armed to the teeth with passes and authorisations though you may be, you must allow for some time in police stations, possibly film destroyed, while your innocence of fifth-column activities is established. Home Guards will pop out of hedges, zealous farmers fear for their sheep, and hysteria generally impede your innocent endeavours.

More serious perhaps are transport difficulties. Consideration of this aspect must be a major factor in deciding the sort of subject to attempt, and the ease or otherwise of obtaining the material. Your subject, in short, should be as near home as possible, or the material be concentrated in one location, or the various locations be easily reached. Failure to give proper consideration to these points may mean inability to complete the material needed, or the expenditure of a good deal more time to get it, or much greater production costs.

Another difficulty connected with the war applies particularly to geography films. This is the change in the normal appearance of the countryside—not so much by the apparition of tank traps, gun emplace-

ments, machine-gun posts and barbed wire, all of which can easily be avoided, but by changes in agricultural appearance. In Devon eighteen months ago it would have been easy to photograph landscapes which showed that most of the land was used for grazing, and that there was very little arable land; now it is not so easy. In teaching film, it is the normal and typical that should be recorded, not the abnormal, and though one cannot foresee the agricultural changes that war will bring about, one must take a long term view with a teaching film that will take something like five years to pay for itself, and assume that there will be some return to normal and traditional agricultural practice.

These are some of the factors that present conditions make it necessary to bear in mind in planning production, and in determining the sort of subjects that can be attempted. There are as well other and more permanent considerations.

## Other Aspects

There are many subjects that I, as a teacher, would like to see filmed and many which as a producer I would not be prepared to undertake. For example, the Dartington Unit has never attempted microscopic cinematography, because it is more than doubtful whether it could reach on 16 mm. the high standard set by the G.B.I. biological films. It has approached the problems of animation with extreme caution, starting with the simplest kinds, and only proceeding by very cautious steps to more complicated work, of the kind we finally attempted in *The Development of a River System*. "Never bite off more than you can chew," is a very sound maxim in the production of teaching films with only limited equipment, time, or experience. So choose a subject you can reasonably be expected to cope with. Unless you have ample means, your experiments will probably end up in the finished film; they may be none too successful! Dozens of amateur films are ruined aesthetically because the subjects chosen involve a great deal of interior photography without lighting.

## Subjects

There are so many hundreds or even thousands of subjects on which classroom films should be made, that the choice of a subject may only be limited by the above considerations. There are others, of course, such as expense, but the first choice of a subject is only the beginning, and many an ostensibly promising subject has turned out on closer examination to be difficult or impossible. For instance, there would seem to be scope for a good film on soils, and I

have considered embarking on such a subject for some time. The difficulties, however, become greater the more consideration is given to it. They may be summed up thus:

1. Devon is not such a suitable region as it seemed at first sight, because contrasts between different soils are not (pictorially) great enough, as they would be, for example, between millstone grit, limestone, and chalk country. A great deal of travelling would be involved to demonstrate even the simplest contrasts, not simply from one region to another, but also within the regions selected.

2. The material would probably tend to be (a) very static, (b) controversial. For both these reasons commentary would be desirable, and therefore expense increased.

3. But variations in shades of brown would be best demonstrated by colour. This presents all sorts of technical problems connected with the very small degree of latitude in colour film at present, and with its capacity to show clearly quite subtle variations in a dull colour range. There would also of course be a very great increase in cost in the preparation of a colour negative.

4. Finally, the combination of sound and colour on 16 mm. would not only be very uncommercial, but there is the added difficulty that while a black and white 16 mm. sound film can be made from ordinary stock in an ordinary camera, sound being post-synchronised, colour film to which a sound track is to be added is perforated on one side only, which would naturally involve the use of a special camera which would take such film through the gate. For such reasons an ostensibly promising subject at first sight would be abandoned at a very early stage, certainly before any film had been shot. Let us consider, however, a film in which such initial difficulties have not existed or have been overcome, and which has actually been completed during the past year. The Dartington Hall Film Unit has just completed a film for junior children on two contrasted farms, called *An Upland Farm and a Lowland Farm*. The whole script, consisting of about 230 shots, is too detailed to consider in a short article, but something useful may emerge from a consideration of the first reel, dealing with the upland farm.

## A Script Analysed

The first consideration is, of course, whether the proposed theme is a suitable and useful one for schools, and if so with which age groups. Having decided this, the main problem is how the material is best presented to children of such an age. In brief, the theme was to be the differences between farming on uplands and lowlands, the main concern of the farmer on the one hand being with store cattle and sheep on rough and extensive farm lands, on the other with animals living on much richer pastures which, in the case of cattle, would produce more milk, of sheep, more meat. This was to be presented in such a way that it would be useful and interesting for children of ten and upwards. The contrasts were to be in two reels, not item by item. Having proceeded so far, and given some, though not detailed consideration to other matters, such as how much of other activities on both farms should be shown, the next step was to discuss it with an experienced teacher of this age-group. With the



assistance of such a teacher, a more detailed treatment was worked out, a first draft of an actual scenario written, and the wording and number of titles also considered—a very important consideration. After this, the script was sent to the Scottish Film Council, who returned it with comments and criticisms, as a result of which considerable alterations in approach were made. Lastly it was checked over and discussed with an agricultural economist for accuracy of statement, and as to how typical the items selected were. All this may seem to the enthusiast only too anxious to get out into the field and shoot his pictures an unnecessarily elaborate preparation. But, quite apart from the considerable saving of expense by shooting to as accurate a script as it is possible to have, the result of all these contacts was considerable modification of the original line of approach. For instance, the original title was *Two Devon Farms*. This was later changed (with a consequent change of approach), because it was felt that it was more important to show the general differences between upland and lowland farming rather than the particular differences in a given region. This introduced complications, since of course the differences in lowland farming are considerable as between East Anglia and Devon, but it nevertheless gives the film a wider applicability, and therefore (we hope) a wider circulation. The contrasts in fact, are both general and related to a particular region and the film thus serves a dual purpose. This discussion and submission to teachers may go on for some time; but finally a shooting script is produced, by which time it has been possible to estimate the cost of the production and the length of time the film takes. There is no space here to discuss costing, but it is clear that the cost must as far as possible be known in advance unless funds are unlimited, if the film when finished is to approximate to the script.

Something should be said now about the actual problems involved in the preparation of the final or shooting script. Clarity may therefore be gained if the treatment or synopsis of this first reel is printed here.

### Treatment

The film opens with a long shot of extensive moorland country, the camera panning to the farm, which is then shown in close up. The farm is in a sheltered valley, protected from the strong winds and rains of the uplands. A map shows its precise location on Dartmoor. The question: the country round the farm looks like this. How do you think the farmer lives? is followed by shots showing the upland grazing lands stretching round the farm, details of the kind of ground, streams, sheep and cattle. The pictures show no ploughed land. A little occurs in the immediate neighbourhood of the farm, where crops such as oats, potatoes and roots can be grown. Potatoes being pulled and oats cut by scythe are shown. Animals are more important; rough grass grows on these uplands, on which sheep and cattle can live. But the grass is poor, and not many animals can be grazed to the acre. Thus the farmer needs a lot of land to his farm, and it is called an extensive farm. Dipping and shearing sheep are then shown, the latter with hand shears, as typical activities at certain times of the year of the upland farmer. His cattle are called beef or store cattle. Although they are kept mainly for their meat, the cows must also

be milked every day. There are other animals; on the moor are ponies which run wild most of the year, and are rounded up every September, and some of them sold at the annual pony fair. There are other animals—pigs, chickens, and geese, which are cheap to keep, and bring in a little more money. Every so often the farmer goes into the nearest market. Some of his cattle may be sold to lowland farmers to be fattened up. He may also sell some other produce, or buy new stock. At the same time, his wife will take this opportunity to buy other things, such as fruit, which the farm does not produce. And when he has finished his business in the market, the farmer goes back to his farm on the uplands.

A treatment such as this is a composite effort; it is written and discussed by the producer, the teacher or teachers consulted, and preferably too by an expert not concerned with teaching but with the accuracy of the statements. And on it the final script is based. It will be observed that while some things in it are peculiar to Dartmoor and to few other uplands, other things with relatively little alteration could apply to the Southern Uplands or the Pennines. This, of course, is deliberate.

### The Shooting Script

How are such statements and impressions as are included in the treatment to be best translated into pictorial terms? The consultants whose comments have helped to produce the above have formed a visual impression from it. It is the job of the director and/or producer to translate these impressions as well as possible into pictorial terms. Let us take some sentences from this, then, and see how they look in the final script. How are "the strong winds and rains of the uplands" from which the farm is protected, for example, shown? Here is the relevant part of the script.

3. Shot of the farm, showing its position in a sheltered valley, a few trees around it, contrasting with the barren upland which is shown behind the farm. The sky is full of heavy clouds.

4. Title. This farm lies in a sheltered valley, where it is protected from the strong winds and rains of the uplands.

5. Close-up of a large raincloud.

6. Close-up of rough moorland grass blowing in a very heavy wind.

7. The same.

8. More rainclouds in the background, in the foreground the boles of trees growing at a decided angle from the vertical.

9. Three trees swaying heavily in the wind, stunted, and their trunks at a decided angle from the vertical.

This is an attempt at the visual representation of strong winds and heavy rain. How successful it will be will depend, of course, on the photography, but the script should show clearly the effect that is intended. Note that the grass comes before the trees, as it reinforces the information conveyed by the trees and leaves little doubt that their meaning will be understood.

It is evident from the above treatment that a great many shots of sheep and cattle will occur at various points in the film. This presents another production problem, as in each case the animals must be, not simply photographed, but photographed in such a manner that they will show as well as possible what is at that point being illustrated.

For example, in the sequence illustrating the title, *The land round the farm looks like this*. How do you think the farmer lives? The pictures must show the land rather than the animals, but must also show the animals to give a class of ten-year-olds some prospect of being able to answer the question from the pictures shown to illustrate it. Obviously, therefore, they must not be shown in close-up, or in such a manner that they are the main item of interest in pictures illustrating a statement about land rather than animals. On the other hand, if they are too remote, they may not be noticed. These are niceties of camera positions with "stars" that cannot be ordered about which provide location problems, as well as providing the cameraman with a good deal of exercise. In the later sequence illustrating the importance of the animals, on the other hand, the animals themselves must be the most important element in the picture but not to the entire exclusion of background, which may give rise to the suspicion that the pictures have been taken anywhere. Shots of landscape to represent a particular aspect of the film may sometimes present even greater problems. Shots of extensive grazing country also occur at intervals throughout the film, in different contexts. The film opens with such a shot. This shot must show, not necessarily the nature of the ground but the nature of the environment as a whole (hilly upland). Later, to illustrate the phrase "extensive farm" (probably new to some viewers of the film in junior groups) the landscape must be approached rather differently. Just any old shot of moorland won't do. The shot used is from the farmhouse itself, panning over fields divided by stone hedges to a granite tor in the distance, which gives a very good impression of the large area of grazing land around the farm. This is followed by mid-long shots of animals grazing, but with the emphasis on the grazing rather than the animals. Compared with such apparently simple things, to shoot sheep shearing is relatively straightforward. The problem of the cameraman is simply to show the operation as clearly as possible from the best positions from which this can be achieved.

### To Fake or not to Fake?

There is another most important question, namely the degree to which "faking" is justified. It has always been my view that whether what one sees on the screen is the "real thing" or not is much less important than if it looks like the real thing. An obvious instance is rain. Real rain merely looks like bad photography; much more convincing results can be obtained with a watering can, and for heavy rains nothing I have discovered beats putting the camera behind a small waterfall in a dry season, and photographing the landscape through the fall. In this film, therefore, considerable trouble and expense has been saved by taking a good deal of material on more easily reached locations.

The above are only a few of the many problems connected with the getting of the right material for a classroom film. Once the material is got, a new set of problems arises on the cutting bench, problems of speed and tempo; but the more care has been taken in the preliminary stages, on the script, the less formidable these later problems become.



# VIEWPOINTS

*The Editor, Sight and Sound.*

Dear Sir,

I am one of those Communist "agents" whom your correspondent from the Hollywood "Experimental Cinema" takes such a violent dislike to.

It would be quite out of place here to start a political argument on Communism, but with what justification does your correspondent abuse the Communist element (which is comparatively large in the film world)? This element has been responsible for many very fine films—it is only necessary to mention such productions as *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, *Juarez* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, all of which were produced under the shadow of the "Red-totalitarian machine"—It is quite untrue to say that this Red element is threatening to overrun the industry as a whole. "Red" films have at least been more realistic than the mass-produced conservative "gangster" and "love" affairs.

"Experimental Cinema's" hatred of Communists does not seem to be based on any reasoned argument or on facts; it actually seems to be more of a deep-rooted fanatical hatred than that of the "fanatical partisans" of whom he writes.

I am not writing to ask that all film producers should turn Communist to produce better films, although I feel that many of them would benefit from a wider and more realistic outlook upon life. What I am protesting against is an unjustified attack upon a certain section of artists and producers (who for the sake of argument one can call Communist as is the habit to-day!) who have done a great deal of good in modern film work, and certainly no harm.

I am, Yours faithfully,

Jon Miller.

3, Gloucester Gate, Regents Park, N.W.1.

*The Editor, Sight and Sound.*

Dear Sir,

In Mr. William Hunter's article "Crisis in Production" in the summer number of *Sight and Sound*, the author includes my films under the category of "semi-professional" which he defines as productions on 16mm. direct instead of 35mm. With your permission I would like to point out that, with the exception of two early efforts, all my mathematical films are photographed on 35 mm., from which 16 mm. or 9.5 mm. reduction prints may be obtained if desired.

Mr. Hunter further speaks of this category of films as "competing" with professional educationals. In my case this is emphatically not the case. Mr. Fairthorne and myself are making a few isolated experiments in pure research. We are not even particularly interested in getting the films shown except in so far as such showing provides data for further research. We are certainly not attempting to supply an already existent market for certain types of educational film—on the contrary we are making experiments to try to find new ways in which the film can be used with advantage for teaching. The films

themselves are of little or no importance—the type of film of which they are examples may be of some little interest.

I think that Mr. Hunter is unduly optimistic of the lower costs of sub-standard production. I happen to have had recently some experience in professional production of educational films on 16 mm. sound film. The films in question were studio productions, and almost all costs except actual stock, were identical. The editing and negative cutting, in fact, cost considerably more than they would have done on 16 mm. for the time required to edit with such minute-sized pictures was two or three times greater than it would have been on 35 mm. The time ratio with negative matching was even greater, for the lack of edge numbers combined with the size of the frame made the job doubly slow and difficult. Further there is no laboratory in England which will at the time of writing produce really satisfactory optical work on 16 mm., and therefore all mixes, unless done in the camera, have to be eliminated. Although of less importance to educational films, sound recording on 16 mm. is still, to the best of my belief, confined in this country to a straight track. If any mixing of commentary and effects or music is required, the track must be recorded on 35 mm. first, and later reduced to 16 mm. after all dubbing has been done.

The above remarks are based on experience gained in the production of studio films. But I cannot see that there would be any further saving had the films been made mostly on location. No doubt the actual cost per foot might have been less, but the ratio between cost on 16 mm. and cost on 35 mm. would have been much the same. I think it would be reasonably optimistic to say that the production of a film on 16 mm. might cost about half the same production on 35 mm.

Yours faithfully,

B. G. D. Salt.

5, Carlingford Road, Hampstead, N.W.3.

*The Editor, Sight and Sound.*

Dear Sir,

I should like to beg a little of your space to reply to some of the points regarding my article in your last number, that Mr. Salt has raised. Regarding his own films, I must plead ignorance; not being a mathematician I know of his films only by repute, and understood that they were all like his earlier ones, made directly on 16 mm. But it is with his estimate of costs that I would mainly like to deal. As regards my own "optimism", it is based on six years' experience of 16 mm. production. Mr. Salt is clearly thinking of "professional" production in the accepted sense, but what I am advocating is something rather different—subsidised production which does not expect repayment quickly on initial costs. If a film is produced in a professional studio functioning normally, obviously the only difference in production costs will be the cost of stock. I am advocating a unit that will have relatively little connection with professional

studios and charges. One great difference between 16 mm. and 35 mm. production as practised now is the relative absence of specialisation in 16 mm. Most 16 mm. productions are written, photographed, edited, and the negative matched with the positive by one man. While I would not advocate this necessarily as an ideal, it is important. A professional cutter is likely to be driven crazy by 16 mm. negative for the reasons Mr. Salt gives. I have, however, had negatives cut professionally for as little as £5 a 400-ft. reel, though so poorly that I have discontinued the practice as far as my own Unit is concerned. These aspects of 16 mm. work are far more simple for people like myself, than for studio technicians, because we are so used to handling these minute pictures. Recently I cut a biological film in which much of the negative consisted of mid-long shots of small birds in dense vegetation. 3,500 feet of negative had to be cut down to 700. This unusually finicky work took me no more than 30 hours. Had I taken the pictures myself I could have done it in less time. In most 16 mm. work the negative is cut by people who are already familiar with the material, usually because they photographed it; professional cutters are not.

Given £4,000 as the production cost for one film a week annually, I am still left with £6,000 of my hypothetical £10,000. I think this would be enough to employ under twelve people at a reasonable salary or wage, and to have the small studio, office and storage space that would be necessary for this type of work. With all this included in the cost of production you still have 50 films for £10,000, or £200 a silent film running for twenty minutes. A fair estimate for the production of a two-reel sound film running for an equivalent time is, I suppose, around £1,400, which gives a ratio as between 16 mm. and 35 mm. in cost of 1:7. I do not think the comparison is unfair in comparing sound and silent films in this context; the type of sound films that are useful in instructional film work would add relatively little to the total costs of a year's production. It would be quite possible within these limits to make a small number of simple sound films. As regards sound, Mr. Salt is right in supposing that it is unsatisfactory, though one can in fact have so-called natural sound and music directly recorded on to 16 mm. now. 16 mm. sound recording is only just beginning; as yet it is more or less at the stage where 16 mm. negative processing was ten years ago. As its serious use increases, so will the seriousness with which it is treated by the laboratories. This applies to mixes, wipes, etc., as well. The necessary apparatus for 16 mm. optical work will be installed when the demand is sufficient, which, of course, will be when the main use of 16 mm. is not to take the baby in the bath or Uncle George slicing a putt, but to make serious instructional and demonstrational films of the type for which I am advocating a subsidy. The processing of negative is already taken much more seriously and its quality enormously improved compared with ten years ago. In time the same will be true of sound recording.

Yours sincerely,

William Hunter, Director,  
Dartington Hall Film Unit.



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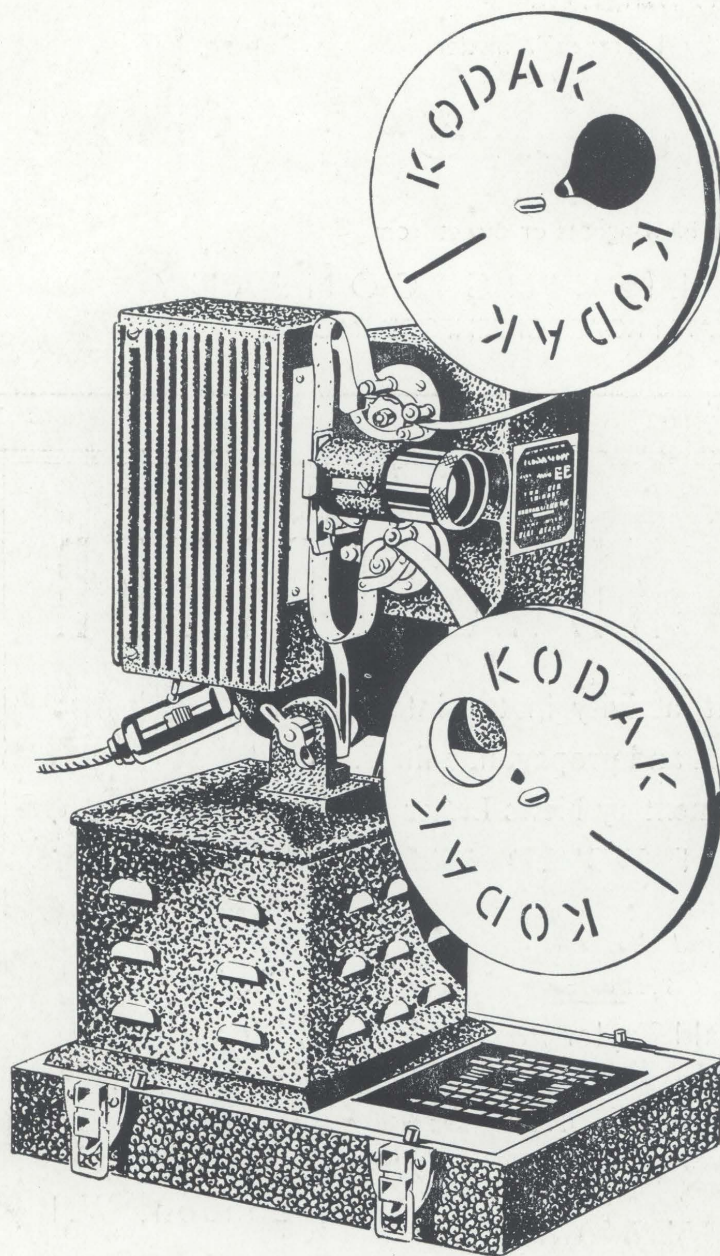
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